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The President's News Conference With President Viktor Yushchenko of Ukraine

April 4, 2005

President Bush. Thank you. It's an honor to stand with a courageous leader of a free Ukraine. Mr. President, you are a friend to our country, and you are an inspiration to all who love liberty. Welcome to America, and we're pleased to welcome your wife as well. We're looking forward to having lunch with you.

President Yushchenko was the first head of state I called after my Inaugural Address. I told him that the Orange Revolution was a powerful example—an example of democracy for people around the world. I was impressed; I know millions of my fellow citizens were impressed by the brave citizens who gathered in Kiev's Independence Square and rightly demanded that their voices be heard. It's an impressive moment, Mr. President, and an important moment. I've oftentimes told our fellow citizens that the world is changing. Freedom is spreading, and I use the Ukraine as an example, along with Afghanistan and Iraq, about a changing world—a world, by the way, changing for the better, because we believe free societies will be peaceful societies.

Mr. President, I appreciate your vision. I want to thank you for our discussion we just had. We discussed a lot of matters. We talked about the neighborhood, of course. We talked about your commitment to fighting corruption, your deep desire to introduce principles of the marketplace in Ukraine. I told the President that our Nation will stand by Ukraine as it strengthens law enforcement, as it fights corruption, as it promotes a free media and civil society organizations. To this end, I've asked Congress to provide \$60 million for new funding to help you in your efforts, Mr. President.

We also agree with your desire to join the WTO, and we'll work with your Government

to join the WTO as well as to lift the Jackson-Vanik trade restrictions that were created in a different era. Secretary Sam Bodman, who is with us here, will be going to the Ukraine to talk about cooperation on energy. We look forward to working with you, Mr. President, as you build progress at home to become a part of Europe, a Europe that is whole, free, and at peace. And at the same time, we'll continue to work with you to help your ties to the North Atlantic Alliance.

Mr. President, I want to thank you for being an active partner in the war on terror. Our statement reflects our common desire to cooperate on law enforcement matters, our desire to have export controls to prevent the spread of dangerous weapons technology, including nuclear materials, MANPADs, and ballistic missiles.

I appreciate Ukraine's strong commitment to a free Iraq. Ukrainian troops helped to protect the Iraqi people during the elections this January. I look forward to cooperating with your nation to help the Iraqis build a peaceful society.

We share a goal to spread freedom to other nations. I mean, after all, the Orange Revolution may have looked like it was only a part of the Ukrainian—the history of Ukraine, but the Orange Revolution represented revolutions elsewhere as well. And I look forward to working with you, Mr. President, in places like Lebanon and Kyrgyzstan. I want to thank you for your conversation on Moldova. I appreciate the discussion we had on—about Belarus.

All in all, Mr. President, we're really thrilled you're here. I know our Congress is looking forward to having you address them next Wednesday. In the meantime, I want to thank you for our frank and open discussion. We wish you all the best, and in America, you've got a strong friend. Welcome.

President Yushchenko. Mr. President, dear American friends, for me, for my wife, it is a great honor and privilege to be received here in the White House and to hear the words that are addressed to my country, my nation, my homeland.

Our ideals are simple and eternal: We want democracy and freedom—our apparent European aspirations, which we were discussing from the first days, many days before

the Maidan events when me and my team went into the politics. This is my vision; this is the vision shared by my team. This is something that my father taught me.

The legacy that we inherited is a very difficult country—Ukraine, where the rule of law did not exist and human rights were not observed, where half of the national economy is a shadow. The humiliated profession of journalism, the journalists wanted to speak the truth and stood against the official power; they could pay dearly. Dearly—I mean it—they could pay their lives for it. We're talking about the country where the number one problem remains to be corruption. We're talking about the country where the huge problem remains the problem of poverty. We realize all those challenges. We realize that it's only—the work that has to be done by the Ukrainian power will help cope with the problems that the country inherited.

However, it is very important, Mr. President, to feel that we have partners standing by, that we are not left in solitude in coping with these troubles. Our conversation began with my saying that for Ukraine, it was a very long road to the Oval Office. I do appreciate the attention that you display and the words that you have said.

And I would like to once again reiterate that the ideals of the new Ukraine are democracy, which we perceive as the priority of people's interests in political, economic, and other areas of development. These are freedom of speech that are the oxygen for democracy; this is a market economy which grants equal rights to people; this is the reliable system of social guarantees that secure protection to the weak. Shortly speaking, the ideals for the new Ukraine are the ideals shared by the Western civilization. I fully concur with my American colleague in his saying that freedom is not the gift for America; this is the Godly gift.

Today, Mr. President, we had a very frank and productive discussion on a very broad spectrum of issues. We were talking about the approaches to deepening our bilateral relations, and this conversation is far from finalization, about the role that democratic Ukraine can play in the regional and global stability, the problem of nonproliferation of

weapons of mass destruction and other subjects.

Essentially, on all questions that we raised, we found mutual understanding. I am convinced that relations between our nations are based not only by mutual sympathy but also by the unity of interests and ideals, like the rule of law, protection of fundamental human rights, and respect for people. Majority of my fellow Ukrainians want to see America as their strategic partner, and I am pleased to see that the U.S. President shares this perception, and he has highlighted this support today.

In our joint statement, which we agreed on, based on our negotiations, we have made it clear that Ukraine and the U.S. confirm the new era in the strategic partnership between our nations and the friendship between our peoples. We are looking forward to the effective support from the U.S. administration to the new Government of Ukraine in addressing important issues faced by ourselves, including our accession to WTO by the end of 2005, the lifting of the trade sanctions on Ukrainian-exported goods, Ukraine's accession to European and Euro-Atlantic security alliances.

We have a unique opportunity to write new and historical pages in the chronicle of our relations, to create the new agenda of real and contentful U.S., American strategic partnership. The democratic Ukraine will enhance stability in Europe and worldwide. And strategic partnership with the U.S. will augment the democratic Ukraine. I'm convinced that our two nations will stand by as global partners in order to achieve freedom, security, and prosperity in the 21st century.

I thank you.

President Bush. We'll answer two questions a side. Terry Hunt [Associated Press].

Iraq

Q. Ukraine and Italy and other allies will withdraw their forces from Iraq. Why should the United States continue to pay most of the cost and suffer most of the casualties when our allies are leaving?

President Bush. Our strategy in Iraq is clear, and it's a common strategy that our coalition has agreed to, and that is to train Iraqi soldiers, Iraqi security forces, so that

they can do the hard work of securing their country. And that's what's happening. And I appreciate the contribution that the Ukrainian people have made toward liberating Iraq and helping provide stability in Iraq and providing security for the elections of Iraq.

And the President made clear to me in my first conversation with him that there—that he campaigned on the idea of bringing some troops out. He's fulfilling a campaign pledge. I fully understand that. But he also has said that he's going to cooperate with the coalition in terms further withdrawals, and I appreciate that.

The fundamental question is, is it worth it? And the answer is, absolutely it's worth it for a free Iraq to emerge. We're talking about a part of the world in which, you know, our foreign policy was, let's just hope for the best and tolerate the fact there's no free societies. And what ended up happening was, there was a—tyrants have emerged, tyrants that threatened our security. And so not only was the action worth it, the action is worth it to make sure that democracy exists, and because democracies will yield peace, and that's what we want.

And so we're going to continue to press forward with a strategy that supports the elected Government of Iraq. Today I spoke to the new Speaker of the Transitional Assembly. I wished him all the best. I thanked him for stepping up to take a leadership role. I look forward to working with the new President and Prime Minister. And I look forward to continuing to implement a strategy that will help Iraqis self-govern. And we're making progress toward that goal. And I want to thank the Ukrainians for their support.

You want to call somebody?

NATO and EU Membership for Ukraine

Q. Mr. President, did you hear a clear position of Ukraine concerning its participation in NATO? And is America ready to support Ukraine in joining the Membership Action Plan this year? Thank you.

President Bush. Thank you very much. Well, you know, the first time I met the President was at NATO, during my latest trip to Europe. And my conversation with him there was the same as I had here, and that is there is a way forward in order to become

a partner of the United States and other nations in NATO. It is a path, and we want to help Ukraine get on that path as quickly as possible. It is not a given. In other words, there are things that the Ukrainian Government must do in order to satisfy the requirements to be considered for NATO.

And we want to help—the whole purpose of this meeting and the purpose of the previous meeting was to help the Ukrainian Government to understand that which is necessary to do in order to become more likely accepted into NATO. And that's what we want to do. We want to help in this process. And I think it's—I'm a supporter of the idea of Ukraine becoming a member of NATO. I think it's important.

I also know that Ukraine wants to join the EU, and there's things that have to do with the EU. But I do want to assure the Ukrainian people that you don't have to choose between the EU and friendship with the United States. That's not a choice the United States Government will make our friends make. You can be both a member of the EU and a friend of the United States. And so we want to help your Government make the difficult decisions and difficult choices necessary to become available for membership in NATO.

Steve Holland [Reuters].

Pope John Paul II

Q. Thank you. How do you think this Pope has affected America's spiritual and political life? And how much weight did you give to his opposition to the Iraq war?

President Bush. First, Laura and I are looking forward to leading a delegation to honor the Holy Father. He will go down in history as a—he will show people that one man can make a difference in people's lives. He was a courageous person. He was a moral person. He was a Godly person. And he's had huge influence, Steve, not only amongst, for example, young people in America but around the world. One of his great legacies will be the influence he had on the young.

He spoke to the poor. He spoke to morality. And of course, he was a man of peace. And he didn't like war, and I fully understood that, and I appreciated the conversations I had with the Holy Father on the subject.

I remember going to Castel Gandolfo—Laura and I were there, and I can remember him taking us out on the balcony of this fabulous palace overlooking a magnificent lake and talking about his views of the world. It was a moment I'll never forget during my Presidency.

And so the world will miss him. And it is my great honor, on behalf of our country, to express our gratitude to the Almighty for such a man. And of course, we look forward to the majesty of celebrating such a significant human life.

One more.

Ukraine's Role in Iraq/Syrian Withdrawal From Lebanon

Q. I have a question for both Presidents, but primarily for Mr. Yushchenko. What will be the American-Ukrainian cooperation in Iraq after the withdrawal of Ukrainian troops? And could you please give some details?

President Yushchenko. First of all, I would like to indicate that Iraq is a zone of Ukrainian interest, and therefore, when this question was debated in the Ukrainian Parliament, the majority of the Parliament members spoke in favor of this type of Ukrainian presence in the country.

Another point, which I'm most pleased to indicate, is, in my opinion, the Ukrainian contingent has demonstrated its peace-making mission in a very effective manner. Over the short period of time that our military contingent has been deployed there, we have retrained three battalions of the national armed forces of Iraq, two companies. We have examined in our hospital about 5,000 local citizens. Due to the securing stability in this region, we returned about 1,500 people to their jobs because it has become much safer to travel to their workplaces.

Beginning from the 9th of January, in our region there is not a single incident in our area, and we therefore believe that it is precisely in this region where the works aimed at restoration of the infrastructure of the province where we had deployed, because there is no water nor other amenities, elementary amenities. And there now these restoration works could be commenced. This will be a very vivid example of how success

can be ensured by pursuing peacemaking policy.

We stand for—we remain arguing that Ukraine is committed to pursuing training—retraining programs for the national guard of Iraq to the armed forces of Iraq. We are prepared to share the experience and the material on a mutually beneficial basis to make sure that this order remains. It is my deep conviction that momentum has been created when Ukraine and diplomats, businesspeople, and politicians must do what Ukrainian peacemakers started.

Thank you.

President Bush. Yes. As to what happens over time, that's going to depend on the Iraqi Government. We're dealing with an elected Government. And they will make the decision as to the security relationship; they'll make the decision as to how the country rewards contracts for reconstruction. This is a free country, and in free countries, Governments get to decide—sovereign Governments decide their future. And so we look forward to working with the new Government. As you know, it's a process. The Transitional Assembly will be writing a constitution, and when the constitution is written, it'll be ratified. And upon ratification, there will be another election.

And so we look forward to working with the Interim Government, and we look forward to working with the Government that gets elected in December, all aimed at helping Iraq develop into a freestanding, peaceful country, which is in the interests of our children and grandchildren, by the way.

I also want to say something about Lebanon. Syria—I appreciate the fact that Syria has expressed its intent to fully leave the country. That only—that not only means troops but it means security forces, as far as I'm concerned. When they say, "We're going to leave the country," we expect troops and security forces to leave. And secondly, it's important for this election to take place on time. And we look forward to continuing to work with our friends and allies to make sure Lebanon is truly free.

Mr. President, thank you, sir. Let's go have lunch. Appreciate it.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 11:51 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, President Bush referred to Kateryna Yushchenko, wife of President Yushchenko; and Hajim al-Hasani, Speaker, Iraqi Transitional National Assembly. President Yushchenko spoke in Ukrainian, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

**Joint Statement by President
George W. Bush and President
Viktor Yushchenko**

April 4, 2005

***A New Century Agenda for the
Ukrainian-American Strategic
Partnership***

Today, the United States and Ukraine affirm a new era of strategic partnership between our nations and friendship between our peoples. We commit our nations to working together to advance freedom and security grounded in democratic principles and institutions, which form the foundation of our relationship.

We salute the people of Ukraine who claimed their right to elect freely their leadership. Their brave stand was a victory for democracy inspiring those throughout the world who yearn for freedom and dignity in the face of tyranny, isolation and oppression. The territorial integrity, security, and political and economic transformation of Ukraine are essential to building a Europe whole, free and at peace. We will work together to strengthen democratic institutions in Ukraine and to advance freedom in Europe, its neighborhood and beyond.

We will work to defeat terrorism wherever it occurs and to advance economic development, democratic reforms and peaceful settlement of regional disputes. We are grateful to the men and women of those nations who have served and sacrificed for Iraqi freedom. Today, we pledge ourselves anew to assist the Iraqi people to secure liberty, peace and prosperity, and we join our efforts to assist Iraq in its economic reconstruction. Fear and resentment, the breeding ground of terrorism, must be replaced with freedom and hope.

We also commit to work together to back reform, democracy, tolerance and respect for

all communities, and peaceful resolution of conflicts in Georgia and Moldova, and to support the advance of freedom in countries such as Belarus and Cuba. Citizens in our open societies value the freedom to practice their faiths, and we are committed to promoting religious tolerance globally.

As Ukraine undertakes far-reaching reform at home, it can count on the United States for support. We applaud Ukraine's commitment to curb corruption, promote the rule of law and improve the business climate. Progress on reforms will allow Ukraine to realize its aspirations to move closer to, and ultimately join European, Euro-Atlantic and international institutions.

We will further integrate Ukraine into the world economy and promote investment and trade between our two countries. As a first step, the Ukrainian Government seeks expeditious U.S. recognition as a market economy. We agree to continue our close cooperation to ensure a process that recognizes the evolution of Ukraine's economy.

We are committed to working together to achieve Ukraine's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO). For its part, the Ukrainian Government will seek to secure, on an urgent basis, approval of legislation and enact regulations that will facilitate accession and contribute to lasting economic reform, including in agriculture, manufacturing, services and the protection and enforcement of intellectual property rights. The United States and Ukraine are committed to working together to complete our bilateral negotiations for Ukraine's accession to the WTO in 2005. We will also cooperate on the outstanding multilateral work that must be concluded for Ukraine's WTO accession. We also support immediately ending application of Jackson-Vanik to Ukraine.

The United States supports Ukraine's NATO aspirations and is prepared to help Ukraine achieve its goals by providing assistance with challenging reforms. The United States supports an offer of an Intensified Dialogue on membership issues with Ukraine at the meeting of Alliance Foreign Ministers in Vilnius, Lithuania later this month. Our cooperation will also deepen through the U.S.-led, largest-ever NATO